

## High Frequency Words! What, Why, and HOW!!

This month's tip is a list of high-frequency words developed by the Start-to-Finish team, who have developed the Start-to-Finish book series ([www.donjohnston.com](http://www.donjohnston.com)). High-frequency word lists abound in the world of education, but this one is useful for three reasons:

- 1) The list is large enough to support readers beyond first grade, but small enough not to be too daunting
- 2) It presents the top 50 and top 100 most frequently occurring words in order of frequency
- 3) Knowing this list means knowing about 60% of the running words in any book.

### Do's and Don't's

- 1) Mastery of these words is essential to fluent reading, but don't use the list as a 'drill-and-kill' activity. Select a word from the list and add it to a word wall. Wait until the word is encountered in authentic text before doing so.
- 2) With the word wall up and in full view of the students, give a spelling test using only words that can be found there.
- 3) Read, read, read. Mastery of these words comes from authentic reading and lots of it. Remember, the best readers in 5<sup>th</sup> grade spend an hour a day reading beyond the school day. The struggling readers spend less than one minute. Make sure every student has books (that's plural, folks) available at his or her independent and instructional level.
- 4) For those very beginning, older readers, consider [Literacy Starters](http://www.donjohnston.com) ([www.donjohnston.com](http://www.donjohnston.com)). As an author in that series, I can tell you that we work hard to pack the stories with words from this list.

Thanks to Jerry Stemach for sharing this very useful, concise list!

## Another Creative Use for the 330 Word List!

From Jerry Stemach:

Here's another way I used the 330 word list.

In Co:Writer, I made a zero dictionary and named it "Tom's Dictionary" per the name of the student. I would let the student pick a word to put into the dictionary, say, his name: Tom.

Then I picked a word from the 330 list: the  
Now, the zero dictionary has two words in it.

Then I gave a spelling test via Co:Writer. "The first word I want you to spell is 'Tom'."  
All Tom has to do is know that selecting "t" will bring up his name.

But---oh, by the way---there's "the" as well. So now Tom has to do a bit of discriminating between just these two words. Guess what? He gets it right!

"OK, Tommy my boy. Ready for your next word? THE  
He gets this right as well, and scores 100%.

Next day, two more words.

Next month, enough words to "write" a sentence from dictation.

End of year? Many words known and "spelled" correctly. It's story writing time!

# 330 Sight Words Every Reader Must Know

The Top 50 (RED) Numbered in Order of Frequency

51 – 100 (BLUE) Numbered in Order of Frequency

<u>a</u> (6)	book	far	<u>his</u> (47)	may	over (71)	space	United States
<u>about</u> (67)	both	farther	<u>home</u> (86)	<u>me</u> (41)	own	still	until
above	boy	father	<u>house</u> (58)	mean	page	story	<u>up</u> (28)
across	<u>but</u> (39)	feet	how	men	paper	study	upon
after	by	few	however	might	part	such	us
again	call	find	<u>I</u> (3)	mile	people	sun	use
against	<u>came</u> (79)	first	<u>if</u> (36)	money	picture	sure	usually
air	<u>can, can't</u> (54)	five	I'll	more	place	table	very
<u>all</u> (25)	car	follow	I'm (75)	morning	<u>play</u> (42)	<u>take</u> (89)	<u>want</u> (80)
almost	change	food	important	most	point	tell	<u>was</u> (14)
along	children	<u>for</u> (73)	<u>in</u> (12)	mother	<u>put</u> (55)	than	water
also	city	found	into	move	read	<u>that, that's</u> (10)	way
always	cold	four	<u>is</u> (33)	Mr.	really	<u>the</u> (2)	<u>we</u> (18)
America	<u>come</u> (69)	from	isn't	much	red	their	<u>well</u> (48)
an	could	front	<u>it, it's</u> (4)	must	remember	<u>them</u> (32)	<u>went</u> (29)
<u>and</u> (1)	country	gave	<u>just</u> (50)	<u>my</u> (16)	<u>right</u> (72)	<u>then</u> (9)	<u>were</u> (96)
animal	course	<u>get</u> (23)	keep	name	room	<u>there, there's</u> (17)	<u>what</u> (49)
another	cut	girl	kind	near	<u>run</u> (93)	these	<u>when</u> (35)
answer	day	give	knew	need	<u>said</u> (37)	they (11)	where
any	did	<u>go</u> (13)	<u>know</u> (27)	never	same	thing (53)	which
are	<u>didn't</u> (88)	good	land	new	saw	think (76)	while
aren't	different	<u>got</u> (21)	large	next	<u>say</u> (66)	<u>this</u> (26)	white
<u>around</u> (95)	<u>do</u> (59)	great	last	night	school	those	who
as	does	ground	late	<u>no</u> (62)	sea	thought	whole
ask	doesn't	group	later	<u>not</u> (92)	second	<u>three</u> (78)	why
<u>at</u> (57)	done	<u>had</u> (45)	laugh	now	<u>see</u> (52)	through	will
ate	<u>don't</u> (31)	half	learn	number	seen	<u>time</u> (63)	<u>with</u> (43)
away	door	hand	left	<u>of</u> (22)	set	<u>to</u> (5)	without
<u>back</u> (61)	<u>down</u> (38)	hard	let	<u>off</u> (98)	several	today	woman
be	during	<u>has</u> (87)	life	often	<u>she</u> (19)	together	women
<u>because</u> (51)	each	<u>have</u> (30)	light	old	short	told	word
been	early	<u>he, he's</u> (8)	<u>like</u> (24)	<u>on</u> (15)	should	<u>too</u> (64)	work
before	earth	head	line	once	show	took	world
began	<u>eat</u> (100)	hear	<u>little</u> (40)	<u>one</u> (20)	side	top	would
begin	end	heard	live	only	since	toward	write
below	enough	help	long	open	small	tree	year
best	even	<u>her</u> (56)	look (99)	<u>or</u> (74)	<u>so</u> (44)	true	<u>you</u> (7)
better	ever	<u>here</u> (85)	made	order	<u>some</u> (60)	try (77)	young
between	every	high	make (94)	<u>other</u> (65)	<u>somebody</u> (90)	turn	<u>your</u> (97)
<u>big</u> (70)	eye	<u>him</u> (46)	man (91)	our	something	<u>two</u> (68)	you're
black	face	himself	many	<u>out</u> (34)	soon	under	
body	family				sound		

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NOTE: Underlined words in red represent the 50 most frequently occurring words (number signifies order of frequency from highest [1] to lowest [50])  
The frequency rating for words showing a double entry (e.g., [can, can't]) technically applies to the first word of the double entry only.